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Retention of Women of Color in Higher Education

Edith Romero

Santa Clara University

Winter 2018

Retention of Women of Color in Higher Education

Introduction

Retention is an aspect of higher education that is taken into account when assessing the overall performance of an institution of higher education. The world of higher education was historically created for white wealthy males, thus making it difficult for students of color, especially for women of color to be successful. A major historical component that has held back people of color from pursuing a higher education is de jure and de facto discrimination. These two forms of discrimination have manifested themselves in a variety of forms, especially in the lives of women of color. Colleges and Universities take note of how many students return the following year and how many are not able to stay with them throughout their entire undergraduate education. Retention, which refers to the continued possession or control over something, of students of color has been noted to be difficult for a variety of reasons but is not commonly measured (Lectic Law Library,n.d).

The retention of students of color often goes overlooked because of the difficulty to obtain data on the topic. This study is important to understand what can be improved to increase the enrollment and retention of students of color, especially women of color, in higher education. With the retention of women of color comes the increase of professionals and with that more individuals that will see and feel that they too can obtain a degree of higher education. Because college was not created for people of color, students of color need to see themselves reflected in the institution in order to realize that they can be successful.

There are factors that are of special concern to students of color when they attend an institution of higher education. After numerous studies conducted throughout the years,

researchers have found significant factors to include financial difficulties, family support and the campus climate of the institution that they attend. Financial stability is a factor that contributes to the sense of peace while attending college; a student that does not have to worry about paying for anything related to school or personal expenses, is able to focus on their academics. Family support is a second factor which comes in different forms including the amount of guidance that a student is receiving in terms of their academics (Fischer, 2007). Lastly, campus climate also has an impact on the retention of women of color. Among the parts of the climate are the professors and the resources available on campus. This research aims to answer the question: how does Hermanas Unidas at Santa Clara University contribute to the retention of women of color in higher education? While focusing on the three main factors that contribute to the retention of women of color in higher education- financial difficulties, family support and campus climate.

Literature Review

Financial Difficulties

One of the factors that affect the retention of women of color in higher education is the financial difficulties faced by the students. Being able to attain a degree in higher education comes with a price tag that is difficult to reach for everyone. This price can surpass the income of the family of a student, making it nearly impossible to attend without the financial support of others (Cheng, Ickes, Verhofstadt, 2011; Martin, 2015; Yeh, 2002; Pyne, Means, 2013). The price for colleges and universities vary depending if the institution is private or public and if in state tuition or out of state tuition is being considered. Because not everybody has the means to pay for college out of pocket, the financial aspect becomes a burden for college students.

Through research, researchers have found that the financial burden becomes a factor in the retention of students of color in higher education as it impedes their focus to be solely on education.

A study conducted in 2011 by Cheng, Ickes, Verhofstadt, found that financial difficulties contributes to the overall stability of students in college and being able to obtain a higher grade point average. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of economic support on students as well as family support. The study consisted of 373 participants from the University of Texas at Arlington. Participants completed an online survey consenting to provide truthful information about their family economic support to them. A likert scale was used to individually scale the aspects of family support and economic support that were being evaluated. The researchers concluded that for the students that received more financial support from their families were able to concentrate more on their studies thus obtaining higher grade point averages. While students that did not receive a substantial amount of financial support were often led to worry about their finances rather than investing most of their time on their academics. For females, realizing that their family could not support them much financially proved to be an extra toll on their emotions.

In another study, Martin, professor at the University of Missouri-Kansas, examined the experiences of first year students and compared the reports from students that returned the following year and those that did not return. Students submitted personal stories as a way of introducing their own experiences about their time at the University. The researchers evaluated the responses received and found common trends among those that reported to have had positive and negative experiences, respectively. A part of the research was to identify if the student lived

on or off campus as a way of determining if that had any effect on their experience, especially in their sense of feeling financially and academically stable. Researchers concluded that because institutions are not supportive of everyone, then not all students should be in higher education, only those that are focused on should remain at the institution. If all students had access to resources that would make their college experiences more positive, they would all end up returning and there would not be as many negative experiences.

The research by Theresa Ling Yeh examines the reasons why Asian Americans are considered to fall in the at 'risk category'. Data was gathered through a variety of outlets predominantly through the research of others. The researchers found that the risk factors varied from person to person but among some of the factors that affect Asian Americans in particular are language, education and immigration status. All of these factors are important because they affect the academic accomplishments of the students on a more emotional and social level. These factors were perceived as being determinant of putting students at risk which makes them more likely to have a harder time with their retention once they were to go to college.

Pyne and Means were able to conduct a case study with a student to be able to take a look at the story of a successful student in higher education with multiple intersectionalities during her first year in higher education. The case study is part of a larger study that consisted of 10 participants all with very similar backgrounds one which was having financial barriers. This study brings to light a lot more in depth the ways in which these different factors really can come together and change the way that students are affected in higher education. Through the case study, researchers were able to find that because of the success that the study, Ana, had in high school, she was able to have multiple scholarships to aid her in her paying for college. Yet,

money was still a worry because of family problems that were going on which she still felt responsibility for and brought on a new type of burden. This is an aspect of finances that often goes unnoticed or overlooked due to the fact that it is not a cost that goes on the expenses for college, but it is still a part of the lives of students that can deviate them from their academics. Although finances are an important aspect of retention, it is not an isolated factor. Family support goes hand in hand with financial support because of the fact that families are often the first source of finances for most students.

Family Support

Family support can be demonstrated through a variety of ways including academic support as well as financial support. There are aspects about college that family members are often able to help a student with such as planning courses to graduate in time as a way of relieving stress during their time in higher education. A study done by Farmer, Hilton and Reneau found that the amount of hours spent on school work has a greater impact on the overall academic achievement of the student. The researchers viewed the variables that were affecting the retention of Black American female students at a Historically Black college. The purpose of the study was to determine if there were parts of a student's life prior to attending college that would affect their retention. The basis of the study was done using Tinto's theory to develop the three research questions that relate to the variables that are essential in thinking about the retention and success of African American females. They used a variety of descriptive and multivariate techniques to obtain responses to the questions which were answered by 785 Black American females that composed the Fall 2015 freshman class. The study found that there are multiple reasons that go into the retention and success of Black American females, in particular

the hours attempted and earned in college and the amount support that they receive from their family members once they are in college.

The study conducted in 2011 by Cheng, Ickes, Verhofstadt, found that the social support that families provide for their students has an effect on the stability of the grade point average of the student. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of economic support on students as well as family support. The researchers found that family support was significantly more meaningful and detrimental for the success of the female students in comparison to the males. Even though the amount of support in the study was not notably different, the benefits are much greater for females.

Melendez conducted a study in 2010 where he examined the effect of parental attachment on the adjustment and retention of women of color in higher education. Melendez uses the Parental Attachment Questionnaire (Kenny, 1994) as well as a questionnaire geared towards the student adaptation questions. Melendez found that parental attachments across different racial groups does affect students differently. He was able to identify student athletes as having a tougher time adjusting. The research was conducted at a commuter college in the East coast which adds to a different perspective than colleges and universities where students generally live on campus. Family attachment in these settings makes a different impact on the lives of the student because they are able to see their family more often than if they were to live on campus.

Professors Susan Sy and Jessica Romero, at California State University Fullerton conducted a study to examine the ways that family responsibilities affect the experiences of women in college. Interviews were conducted with 20 first and second generation women between the ages 18 and 29 years old. The researchers identify a cultural value, familismo, which

emphasizes “family closeness and loyalty” as being a big characteristic of Latino families. Familismo is an interesting concept because the value contributes to the reasons why if the family is not being as outwardly supportive to the student then the student’s retention and success in college could be jeopardized. The study conducted by Fuliigni and Pedersen claim that family support can be presented as being a double edged sword for ethnic minorities. Familianismo in this study lead to the conclusion that families can also have a negative effect on the way that a student is able to perform in college. The familial aspect of the student’s life can add to the stress that the campus culture of a campus already comes with.

Campus Climate

Campus climate is important in analyzing the way a university is or is not providing the necessary support for students, especially women of color, to feel comfortable enough to return year after year to the institution. Adrienne Carter-Sowell and Carla Zimmerman (2015) conducted research where they outlined the reasons that make researching women of color so difficult. They state that because there is such a small population of women of color, it is difficult to find women that are willing to participate in studies as such. They also believe that in order to study women of color, it is important to be creative and find organizations where they already come together for the purpose of feeling united. This is an interesting concept because they are acknowledging the lack of diversity on college campuses and instead of noting it as a problem, they are simply normalizing it, which is part of the problem with trying to have a higher retention rate of women of color.

Mary J. Fischer, a professor of Sociology at the University of Connecticut, conducted research where she analyzed the different experiences in settling to campus life based on the

different race and ethnicities. Fischer states that as the number of Hispanic and Black student increase in higher education, so does the need to know what factors are essential in their retention. The study was a national longitudinal survey of freshmen of about 4000 first time students entering selecting colleges and universities. The researchers were able to complete 3924 face to face interviews to come up with criteria to determine their satisfaction based on a 5 item scale. The variables that were being measured were: early college outcomes, family background socioeconomic status and college financing, academic preparation, social adjustment. Academic adjustment, campus environment, school level characteristics, and adjustment strategies. The researcher found that being able to determine that involvement in formal activities on campus leads to greater satisfaction for Blacks and Hispanics which then lead to greater academic success. For Hispanics, having closer connections to professors lead to greater satisfaction with college. This is important in understanding the amount of support that the universities provide for the students of color when they are on the campus.

Carol Couvillion Landry's research at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 2002 takes a look at the unique experiences of women of color and their retention in higher education. Landry provides numerous subsections that outline the different factors that contribute to the persistence of women of color in higher education. Landry identifies the idea of double jeopardy as being "individuals who endure two disadvantaged statuses at the same time, such as Latina and woman". Double jeopardy is essential in thinking about retention of women of color as it is these factors that intersect with the already difficulty of being women or being a person of color but having them in unison makes it the experiences two times harder, assuming that there are no other aspects that could add to the negative experiences of the students.

Alan Seidman's research found numerous reasons that do not allow students of color to stay in college. He focuses on African Americans, Indian Americans, and Hispanics. Seidman concludes that there are two main reasons that have the greatest impact on the experiences of students of color which are academic integration as well as social integration. Seidman states that without the appropriate investment into these two aspects, the students will not have a very successful experience in college. It is of special importance that the students are aware of the resources available to them so that they are able to have that successful experience. This would add to the overall sense of well being at the campus, which is a factor that is important with the retention of all students in higher education.

Professors, Sandra Thomas, Charles Thompson Howard Pollio, Katherine Greenberg, William Conwill, Amadou Sall, Gary Klukken, Mitzi Davis and Yvonne Dias-Bowie, conducted a study in 2007 based on the attrition of Black students from predominantly White institutions. The purpose of the study was to obtain first hand perspectives through in depth interviews about the experiences of struggling Black undergraduates at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the South. The participants in this study were divided into different phases with about 4 to 12 participants for each phase. There were a total of 22 Black freshmen and sophomores ranging from ages 18 to 20. The research was conducted mainly through in-depth interviews that consisted of open ended questions. The responses of the participants were typed so that the researchers could go back and be able to evaluate the responses of the participants. Researchers at the University of Tennessee found that a number of Black students do not feel that the campus environment is suited for them.

Caroline Turner reflects on the experiences that faculty women of color face on college campuses through her journal. She does this by conducting multiple interviews where she asked the faculty to describe their experiences. The majority of the individuals that were interviewed described their experiences as being difficult. Turner was able to pinpoint five main themes through the research that are reflective of the concerns and difficulties that come with being a faculty women of color on predominantly white campuses. The five themes are: feeling isolated, salience of race over gender, being underemployed and overused by departments, being torn between family, community and being challenged by students. With these different themes, the reader is able to take a look at the ways in which the faculty often feels the same way as the students feel. A major point that was made by Turner in the beginning was stating that even though women face challenges for being a female, they face even tougher challenges because of the intersectionalities of being a female and being a person of color and there would be other factors that are then added onto their experience. Turner found that in order to be able to combat a lot of the difficulties that faculty of color face, universities and colleges need to be able to hire more faculty women of color at all levels of higher education. Turner is able to argue that the success of students and faculty of color go hand in hand because they often face similar difficulties. Although there is an expressed need for more professors of color, in order for that to happen, the retention of women of color needs to increase to insure their continued success through higher education.

Theories of retention have been formulated over time and have adapted to the time periods. Tinto is known as being a big influencer of the concept of retention and much of the work revolving the retention of students in higher education. In his journal "From Theory to

Action: Exploring the institutional Conditions for Student Retention”, he compares the various theories about retention and evaluated them as not being suitable representations of the work that institutions should be doing to retain the most amount of students at an institution. Tinto concluded that there are numerous aspects that should be taken into account when thinking about keeping a high retention rate. Among them are academic support, financial advice, involvement and social support. He states that the requirements can vary from person to person and the assessments should be done on an individual basis rather than attempting to reach everyone through a homogenous method. Retention of women of color comes with unique challenges due the overwhelming factors that have been institutionalized in various systems throughout the years. In order to better understand the experiences, one must take a look at the perceptions of the students themselves in order make the necessary adjustments and suggestions to the financial aspects, the family support and the campus climates at universities.

Conclusion

There are several factors that are important when thinking about the retention of students in higher education. The experiences of all students is different and they all require unique attention and focus. However, the institutions still fail to meet the needs of numerous students. The retention of women of color is an area that is often overlooked and thought of as being seemingly impossible to research because of the intersectionalities of the demographic that needs to be studied .

Based on studies conducted over time, family support financial difficulties and campus climate are all aspects that can have a positive relationship on the retention of women of color independently and dependent of one another. If students are offered the financial means to attend

college and not have to worry about money, they can focus more on their academics or on being involved in enriching organizations than worrying about money. For females, family support is especially important in being able to feel that them being in college is a good idea rather than something negative. Even though there may not be a big difference in the amount of praise that males or females receive, the importance is greater for females in comparison to males. The campus climate is a combination of numerous aspects that is the direct part that can be modified to enable students to feel a sense of belonging.

There is a big emphasis on the student involvement aspect of being a college student but there is little to no information effect that clubs geared toward women of color have on their retention. An organization, based in California, Hermanas Unidas Inc, was established in an effort to provide support and resources to women of color, predominantly Latinas, during their journey in higher education. The following research is based on the experiences of current members with the organization and how they feel that the club has contributed to their retention and persistence in higher education. The research is aiming to respond to the question of how does Hermanas Unidas at Santa Clara University contribute to the retention of women of color in higher education?

Methods

Participants

The study took a look at women of color that were members of the student led organization, Hermanas Unidas at Santa Clara University in California during the 2018-2019 academic term. The participation in the study was completely voluntary and participants were not compensated. The membership of Hermanas Unidas was composed of about 40 members,

including males. For the purpose of the study, a total of 11 females participated in the survey responses and two participated in a follow up interview.

The 11 females were all able to self identify their race and ethnicity, all participants identified as being Latinx with a variety of different way. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 21. All the participants are undergraduate students at Santa Clara University; 3 first years, 1 sophomore, 4 juniors, and 3 seniors. This wide range of age levels allowed for a variance in perspectives and exposure to Hermanas Unidas.

For the interview, participants were selected to obtain one response from a first year student and a senior. This would provide a deeper understanding of the effect of Hermanas Unidas in the first year as a student in higher education versus a student that is in their final year before graduation.

Measures

The measures that were used in the study was a survey that consisted of quantitative and qualitative responses. The survey (Appendix B) was distributed to all members in the beginning of January was intended to collect responses about the experience of women of color on the Santa Clara University campus and as a member of Hermanas Unidas. A total of 6 likert scale questions were used to asses their overall satisfaction. An example of a likert scale question that was used is: Did you ever feel that the University was doing all that it could to make sure that you felt like staying at the institution for 4 years? This question could be answered by responding yes, no or maybe.

In addition, a series of open response questions were used to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with the organization. Many of the open response questions were derived

from the quantitative questions as a space for the participant to elaborate on their response. An example question is: How does Hermanas foster a sense of belonging for you? Explain. This question proved to be very important because although there were overlapped, this allowed the participants to share their unique experiences.

The last question on the survey indicated whether they would be willing to participate in a follow up interview. Two participants were selected based on their response. The interviews were over the phone and in person in a semi structured way. An example question that was asked in both interviews is: How do you feel that Hermanas has contributed to your retention at Santa Clara University? This questions was intended to obtain a more in depth response about the tangible ways that Hermanas Unidas has helped them to return to Santa Clara University.

Procedures

The process of collecting information began in the first week of Winter quarter, in the month of January. The surveys were shared with the co-chairs in the first week to gain permission to circulate the survey to the rest of the members. During this process the student leaders asked to have a section where members could provide suggestions for improvement for the organization. Necessary adjustments were made to accomodate. The following week the survey was shared with members through weekly emails and through the GroupMe. For a total of 3 weeks, the link was open for members to fill out the survey. Once the survey was closed, interviews were held on campus.

Results

Initial analysis of the findings show that of the participants in the study, 82% are first generation college students and 18% are not. A variety of questions were asked including

questions about their satisfaction with the dorm assignment and their relationships with student leaders as well as with professors. For the most part, all participants were happy with their dorm assignment with 70% being in the satisfied and highly satisfied category (Figure 1.1)

Happy with your dorm assignment

10 responses

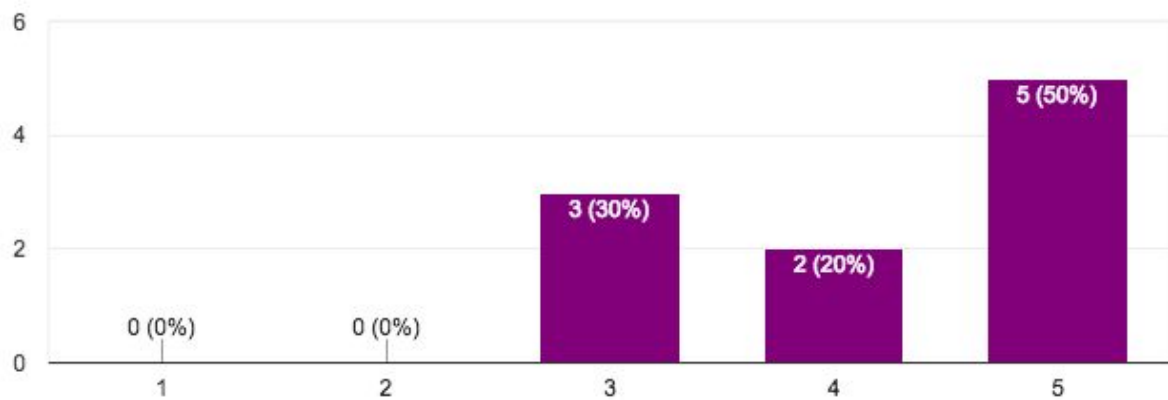


Figure 1.1 Graph of satisfaction with dorm assignment in first year

In assessing the relationships that the participants had with the student leaders, the majority (81.8%) said that they had satisfactory and highly satisfactory relationship with them (Figure 2.1)

Had a positive relationship with the student leaders on campus

11 responses

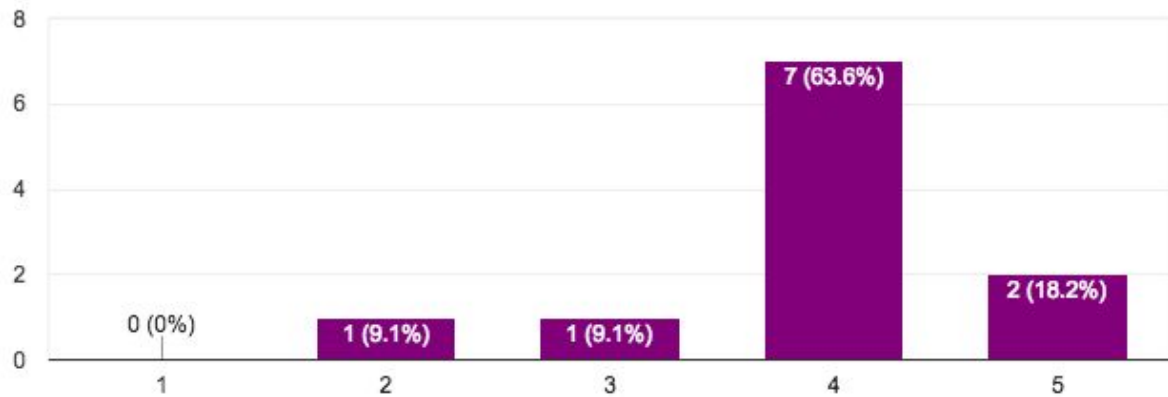


Figure 2.1 Graph of having positive relationship with student leaders

With a bit of a variance, the participants stated that they had a more neutral relationship with the student leaders specifically in the dorm (Figure 3.1).

Had a positive relationship with the student leaders in your dorm

11 responses

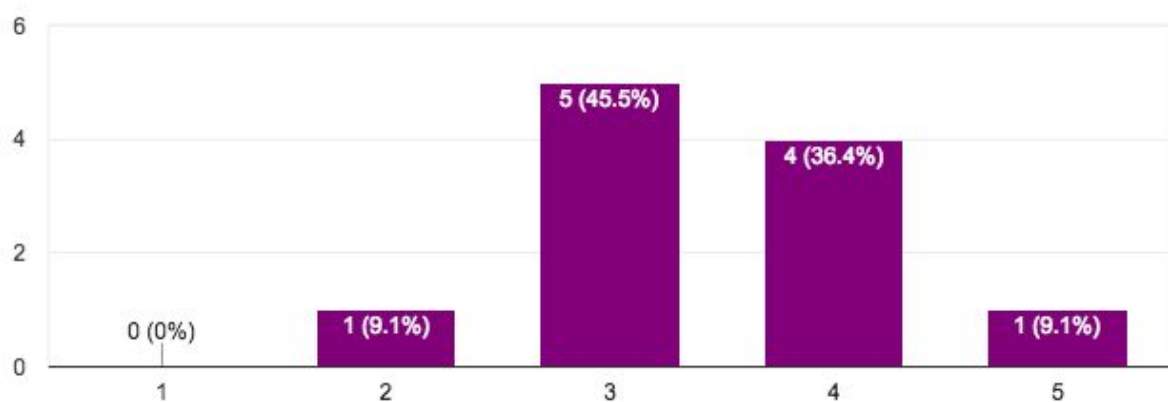


Figure 3.1 Relationship of participants and the student leaders in their dorm

Participants were asked if they believed that Santa Clara was doing all that it could to stay all 4 years. This question revealed that 18.2% did think SCU is doing the best it could, 36.4% said maybe and 45.5% said it is not (Figure 4.1).

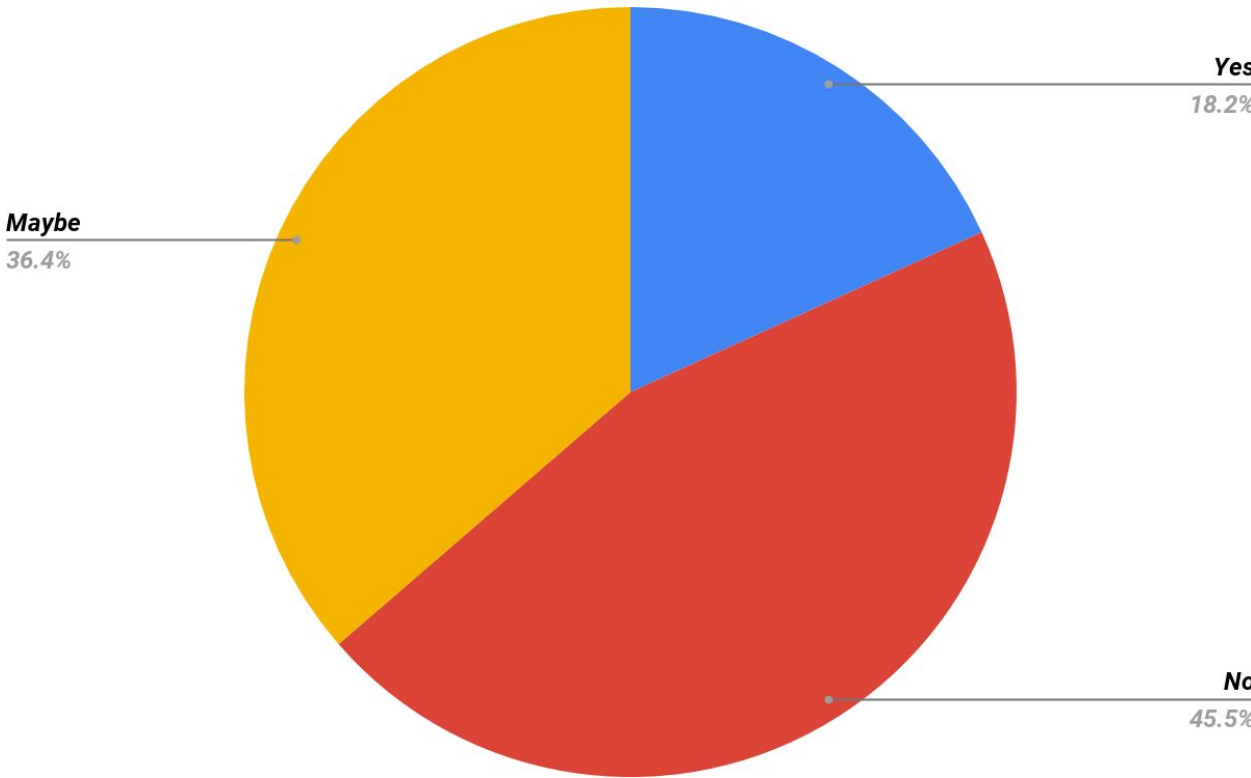


Figure 4.1 Responses about how participants feel that Santa Clara University has helped with their sense of staying or not

Participants described their experience with administration as being negative while pointing out specific individuals that have helped them throughout their time at Santa Clara University. Table 1.1 contains responses to the short response elaboration on the way in which they feel that Santa Clara University helps them with sense of staying or not.

Table 1.1

Participant	Response
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102	“It would be helpful if they provided more resources to Spanish speaking parents”
106	“I was motivated to stay by my support systems here at school; but administration didn’t do much to try to retain students (except for Lorenzo, he was always supportive)”
109	“I feel like this university focuses their energy on keeping donors rather than addressing issues that could affect the retention of their students.”
111	“The university didn’t realize that by accepting a student from a low socioeconomic background that it was making a promise to cover for these expenses through all 4 years. After my first year I had to pay out of pocket, without my parents’ help, and it was so difficult to not only worry about school but money as well. Also, administration doesn’t do the best job at ensuring that the students of color on campus feel safe and secure.”

Lorenzo is a director of undergraduate admissions and former Santa Clara University student who continually participates in events around campus, especially in events that have to do with students of color.

Participant, 109, noticed the monetary aspect that the University has a part in trying to keep their reputation and not the well being of the students. A third participant, 111, wrote from

a personal perspective about how she thinks the University does not do a good job with their retention of women of color.

The participants were asked to select from a list which best applied to how they heard about Hermanas Unidas. 63.6% were told about Hermanas Unidas by a friend. Other options were through social media, the school club fair and through Noche Latina. (Figure 5.1)

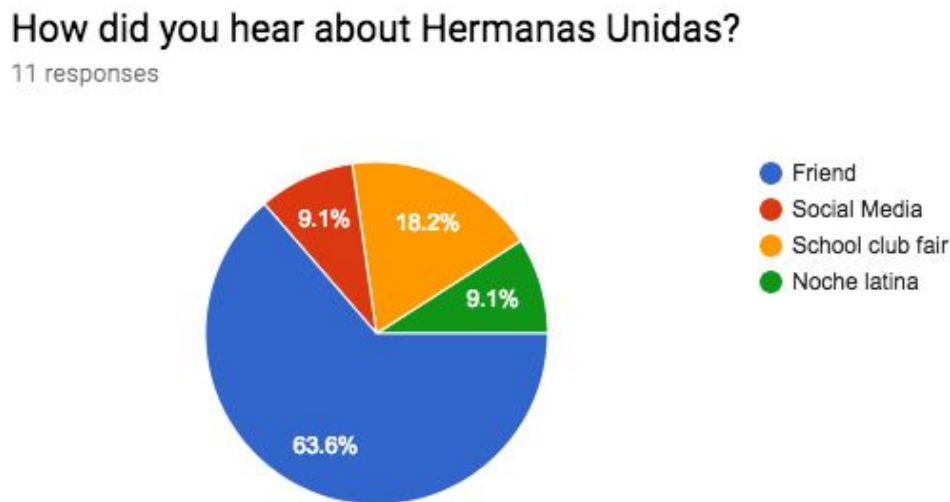


Figure 5.1 the way in which participants heard of Hermanas Unidas

In terms of the organization Hermanas Unidas, 100% stated that they think the meetings are beneficial to their sense of belonging at Santa Clara University. Based on the responses to the open ended question about how Hermanas fosters a sense of belonging (Figure 6.1), 14.3% of the members feel that Hermanas is a reminder of home, 35.7% appreciate that it is an open space with women, and 50% are intrigued by the fact that they all share similar background. Participants shared their perceptions by stating that they enjoy time with women that they share similar backgrounds with.

Table 2.1

Participant	Response
103	“It is nice to be in a room where the majority of people are of the same ethnic group as me because that environment is really hard to find on this campus.”
104	“Hermanas is a space where I met and have become friends with many successful, hard working, and overall amazing Latina women who I can relate to. It's nice to be able to speak about my struggles and have people understand where I'm coming from. I don't feel alone.”
106	“Hermanas gave a sense of belonging. It’s easy to feel comfortable in a group of girls who are sharing a similar experience to you”
107	“It gives me a space to come together with Latina women and speak my mind and feelings without feeling ostracized or oppressed”

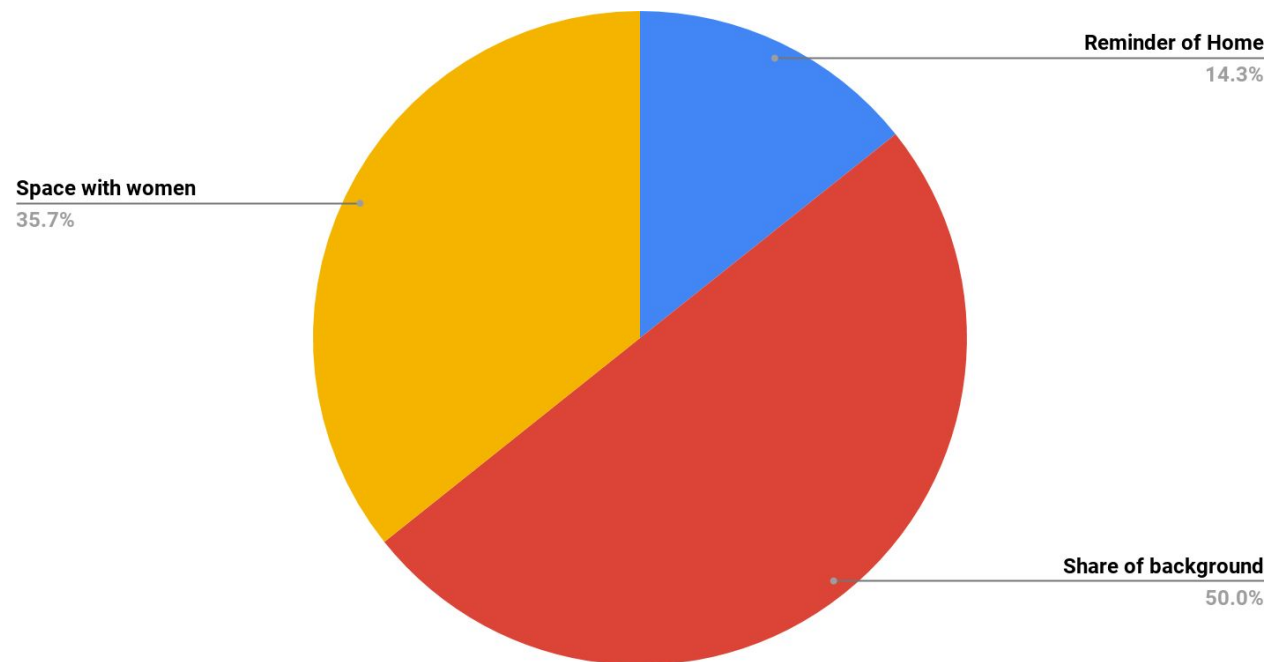


Figure 6.1 Codified data depicting the way that Hermanas Unidas helps members foster a sense of belonging

Some suggestions that members had was having more conversations during the meeting, having more distressing and bonding activities and more meetings focusing on professionalism-50%, 25% and 25% respectively (Figure 7.1). Participant 102 stated, “have more inclusive conversations and discussions rather than lectures.”

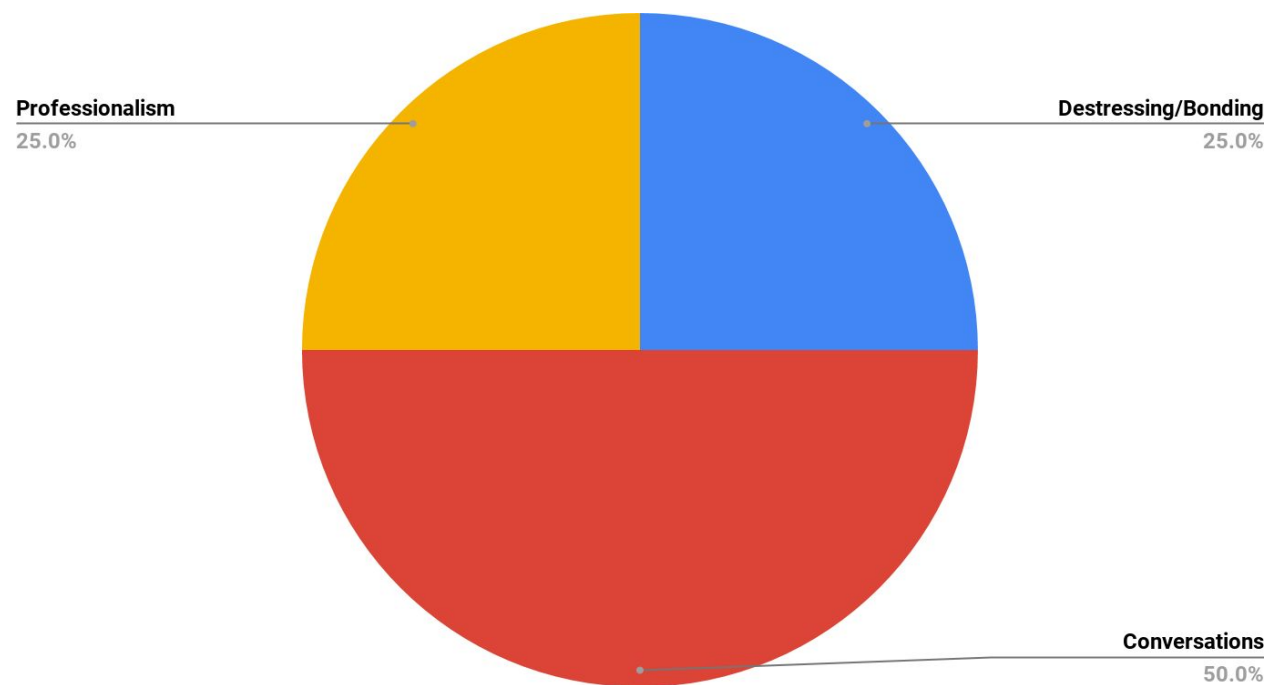


Figure 1.3 Suggestions from members of what Hermanas Unidas could do better to help with retention

Discussion

Financial Difficulties

The responses provided by the participants revealed their frustration with the way in which Santa Clara University does not provide the necessary tools to assist students that may be having difficulty with finances. Participants mentioned that they believe that the University could do a better job at providing resources for parents. Many times, even if the student needs support they are not able to ask their parents because the university does not have a way of communicating with them in a language. Yeh (2002), explored this limitation of retention in his study. Having aspects of oneself that are considered a risk factor, in this case language, then the emotional and social accomplishments of the student are limited.

Additionally, several students that attend Santa Clara University have some type of financial aid that they rely on in order to stay in the University. Because the tuition and room and

board often surpass the income of the students, the financial aspect is very difficult to control (Cheng, Ickes, Verhofstadt, 2011; Martin, 2015; Yeh, 2002; Pyne, Means, 2013). Participant 111 stated that the University knew they had a commitment when they accepted to enroll a student from a low socioeconomic background. Thinking about how the University decides to allocate money is important in understanding what the four years of the students will be, whether or not they will be able to pay their way or not.

Family Support

The data collected reflects the positive ways in which Hermanas Unidas has worked for the members at Santa Clara University, generally, to fill in the gaps that the university and their families have not been able to fill. The participants of the study indicated that Hermanas Unidas provides a space for members to feel like that have a family that supports them. The academic achievement of the students and the way that families impact the achievement is important to consider given the research conducted by Cheng (2011) and Sy and Romero.

Not all students are able to have family support during their time in college. A lot of the need for a support system comes from the fact that most participants were first generation college students meaning, they rely on one another for much of the support and guidance. Many parents would love to be able to provide support for their children, but they are not always able to do so because they may not have the resources or knowledge to provide good advice. The double edged sword that Fuligni and Pedersen describe in their study relating to family support can also add stress to what is occurring on campus in the life of the student.

Even though most of the members, 82%, are first generation students they have been able to find a group where they feel supported and have that familial support that they do not obtain

from their family at all times. Chenge describes the increased benefits of having familial support in contrast to males. Considering that Hermanas Unidas is an organization for women, they are able to provide the needed support and familial feeling to women especially being surrounded by women that they share similar backgrounds with, as was mentioned by participants 105 and 106.

Campus Climate

Because members of Hermanas Unidas find a family in the organization, they are able to focus on their academics knowing that if they are having difficulty with anything on campus, they can rely on one another to get the necessary support that they need. Participants of the research were asked how they were made aware of the existence of Hermanas Unidas. Relating it back to family support, it is interesting to note that most members found out through word of a friend and not through a relative. As was mentioned, institutions of higher education were created for wealthy white males. The small number of groups geared toward women of color at Santa Clara University reflect the fact that universities were not created for women of color. In a school with a total undergraduate population of about 5,500 students, there are only 4 organizations specifically geared for women of color. Mary Fischer found that student involvement in formal activities increases their satisfaction and created better achievement. In order for women of color to have this opportunity, having more options would provide them with a higher opportunity to be successful. If the University does not provide this option, women of color, as has been demonstrated by the research, will continue to have a difficult time with their retention in higher education.

Campus climate is a very important aspect of college for all students especially if they are living on campus. For women of color specifically this proves to be the part that they notice as

being either a positive or negative to their involvement with the campus community. Participants noted that they had good relationships with the student leaders but the majority expressed having a more neutral relationship with the leaders in the dorm. These leaders could be the ones that they spend the most time with, yet they do not feel completely satisfied with their relationship. Seidman would attribute this to the students inability to become completely socially integrated and thus have a much harder time with their academic integration. It is important for students to have a stable healthy relationship with the student leaders so that they feel comfortable enough to ask for help or support if needed.

In addition, the participants noted that they do not feel like they are being supported to the full extent by Santa Clara University, instead they have faced instances where professors have recommended that they change their major or just drop out entirely because they will not be able to graduate on time. Professors are one of the major push or pull factors in the retention of college students. The attitude that the professors that the participants mentioned are the complete opposite of helping to foster a sense of belonging. Hermanas Unidas has proven to be a space for women from similar backgrounds to be able to have conversations that they would not otherwise be able to have in a different setting. Although the participants did not feel entirely supported by the professors, participants mentioned feeling particularly supported by Lorenzo, in admissions and by LEAD. These two groups are able to provide the support and understanding for the intersectionalities faced by the students, such as Landry described as being important to understand to be able to fully and effectively support students.

Limitations

The research conducted has limitations including the sample size and the measure that was used to collect the data. The sample size consists of only 11 participants out of the 58 that are involved in one way or another with the organization. The measure that was conducted created for responses to not be consistent with one another. Some participants responded with long responses while others only provided a one to three word explanation. Although some participants provided information about their financial difficulties or academic difficulties, none of the questions were specific to gain more information about what their financial background was or how their academics may have shifted over time at Santa Clara University.

In addition, Hermanas Unidas is an organization that can only be found in California. This is because, from the beginning of the organization there were numerous chapters that added all within the same time period. This created difficulty to keep the support consistent and mostly uniform throughout the state.

Future Direction

For the future creating a cross sectional research with a public school and a private school could be conducive to understanding the effect of Hermanas Unidas in different university settings. It would also be interesting to compare the responses from the students and responses from administration. This could provide an inside look at what administration says or thinks they are doing versus what the students are experiencing.

It would also be beneficial to have more quantitative information about the participants academics and finances to be able to evaluate the way in which the University and the student organizations could be more supportive to students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Online Consent form

Appendix B: Online Survey

Appendix C: Quantitative Results

Appendix D: Qualitative Results

Appendix A-Online Consent form**LBST 181: SENIOR CAPSTONE SEMINAR
LETTER OF CONSENT FOR ADULTS**

Dear: Hermanas Unidas

I am a student enrolled in the Senior Capstone Seminar in the Child Studies Program at Santa Clara University. I am conducting a research study to determine the effect that organizations that are geared toward women of color has on the retention of women of color in higher education.

I am requesting your participation, which will involve a combination of survey completion, field notes and interviews. I will be conducting interviews only with the participants that choose to be interviewed. I will be reaching out to the ladies that complete the survey initially to see if they want to be interviewed, everything will be on a volunteer basis. I will also be taking a series of field notes during the first half of the quarter. The field notes will only be intended to see the dynamics of the organization in an effort to look at the way that Hermanas Unidas is filling the gaps that the University as a whole is failing to fill.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research will not be published and will only be used for class purposes, including my final research paper. You will be assigned an identification number, and your name will not be used in the final write up or research presentation.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is being able to provide the administration with possible ways that they could support the organization further for the overall benefit of the retention of the women of color at the institution.

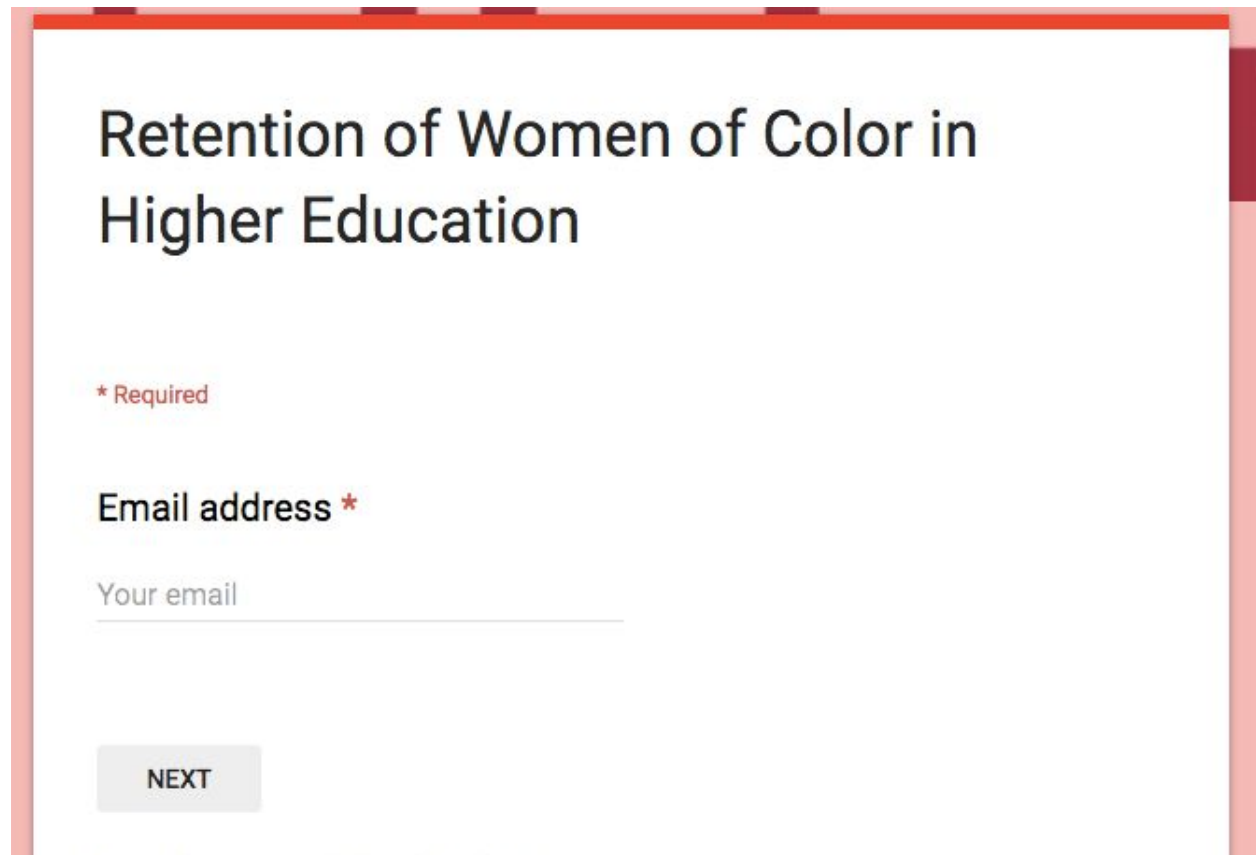
If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call or email me at eromero@scu.edu or (310)935-8131. Alternatively, you may contact my professor Dr. Brett Solomon at bsolomon@scu.edu or (408) 554-4672.

Sincerely,

Edith Romero

Appendix B-Online Survey

Link: <https://goo.gl/forms/9QMjutq0nwED1XOe2>



The image shows a screenshot of a Google Form titled "Retention of Women of Color in Higher Education". The form is displayed within a red-bordered frame. The title is in a large, bold, black font. Below the title, there is a red asterisk followed by the word "Required". The first question is "Email address", also marked with a red asterisk. Below the question is a text input field with the placeholder text "Your email". At the bottom of the form, there is a grey button with the word "NEXT" in black capital letters.

Retention of Women of Color in Higher Education

* Required

Email address *

Your email

NEXT

Participant Consent Form

If you consent to the following information, please continue to the following sections



LBST 181: SENIOR CAPSTONE SEMINAR LETTER OF CONSENT FOR ADULTS

Dear: Hermanas Unidas

I am a student enrolled in the Senior Capstone Seminar in the Child Studies Program at Santa Clara University. I am conducting a research study to determine the effect that organizations that are geared toward women of color has on the retention of women of color in higher education.

I am requesting your participation, which will involve a combination of survey completion, field notes and interviews. I will be conducting interviews only with the participants that choose to be interviewed. I will be reaching out to the ladies that complete the survey initially to see if they want to be interviewed, everything will be on a volunteer basis. I will also be taking a series of field notes during the first half of the quarter. The field notes will only be intended to see the dynamics of the organization in an effort to look at the way that Hermanas Unidas is filling the gaps that the University as a whole is failing to fill.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research will not be published and will only be used for class purposes, including my final research paper. You will be assigned an identification number, and your name will not be used in the final write up or research presentation.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is being able to provide the administration with possible ways that they could support the organization further for the overall benefit of the retention of the women of color at the institution.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call or email me at eromero@scu.edu or (310)935-8131. Alternatively, you may contact my professor Dr. Brett Solomon at bsolomon@scu.edu or (408) 554-4672.

Sincerely,

Edith Romero

BACK

NEXT

Demographic Information

Race/Ethnicity

Your answer

Gender

Your answer

Age

Your answer

Year

- ☐ First year
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Graduate
- ☐ Other: _____

College

- ☐ Arts & Sciences
- ☐ Business
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Other:

Major

Your answer

BACK

NEXT

Experience as new student

This section contains questions on a scale where you will be able to select how much you liked or did not like your experience in your transition to college, please respond based on your experience for your Fall quarter of your first year at Santa Clara University

The scale ranges from 1-5, 1 being highly unsatisfied, 3 neutral and 5 highly satisfied.

Happy with your dorm assignment

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Had a positive relationship with the student leaders on campus

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Had a positive relationship with the student leaders in your dorm

1 2 3 4 5

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Was a part of the LEAD Scholars program

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Other: _____

Was a part of LEAD Week

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Other: _____

Met with professors outside of class time

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Other: _____

BACK

NEXT

Retention

Do you know what the term "retention" means?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

If yes, define retention in your own words

Your answer

Did you ever feel that the University was doing all that it could to make sure that you felt like staying at the institution for 4 years ?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Describe response to prior question

Your answer

BACK

NEXT

Hermanas Unidas

This section focuses on your involvement with Hermanas Unidas and the effect and impact that Hermanas Unidas has had on your college experience.

How did you hear about Hermanas Unidas?

- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ School club fair
- ☐ Other: _____

Are you an "active" hermana? (According to the Hermanas Unidas guidelines)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

On average, how many meetings do you attend a quarter? Why?

Your answer _____

Do you think that the meetings are beneficial to your sense of belonging at your university?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

How does Hermanas foster a sense of belonging for you?
Explain

Your answer _____

The mission of Hermanas Unidas is: Provide resources and leadership opportunities for predominantly women, college students and alumni by participating in and organizing community service events, social activities and academic/professional/self identity workshops. Does the chapter at Santa Clara full fill these aspects? Explain

Your answer _____

Do you know what the history of Hermanas Unidas at Santa Clara University is?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

BACK

NEXT

Hermanas Unidas at Santa Clara University

The history of Hermanas Unidas at SCU is: In the Fall of 2007, five Latina women, Evelyn Jacobo-Vega, Deniss Escorcia, Cynthia Tapia, Erika Duenas, and Mayra Contreras became interested in bringing an already established organization, Hermanas Unidas Inc. to Santa Clara University. Having been on campus for at least two years they felt the need to create an outlet such as Hermanas Unidas, in order to educate about the different resources available on and off campus and to create a support system. Does the chapter meet the history?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Is there anything you would do differently at the weekly meetings ?

Your answer

What is the topic/concept that was discussed at an Hermanas meeting that you can clearly remember?

Your answer

BACK

NEXT

Interview

Would you be willing to do a follow up interview

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Other: _____

BACK

NEXT

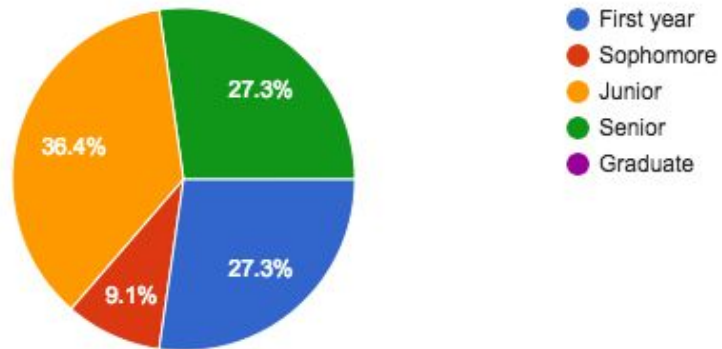
Thank you!

BACK

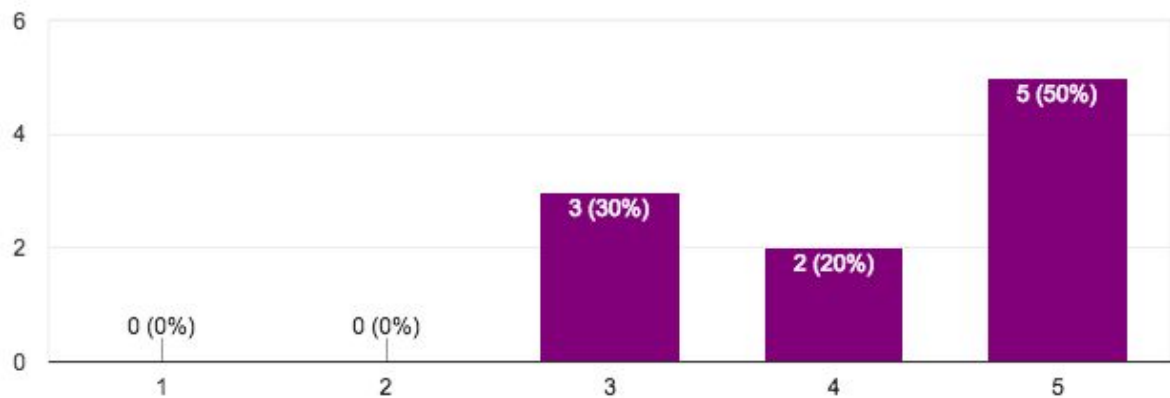
SUBMIT

Appendix C:Quantitative Results**Year**

11 responses

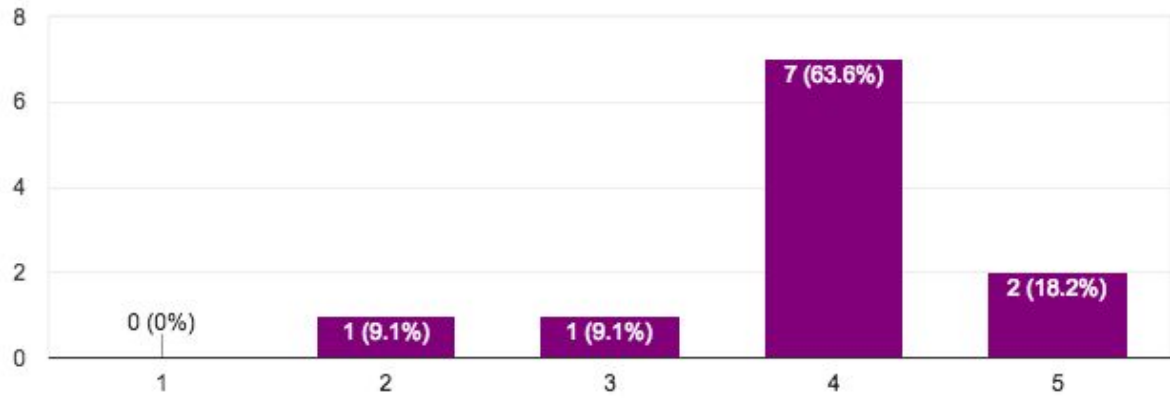
**Happy with your dorm assignment**

10 responses



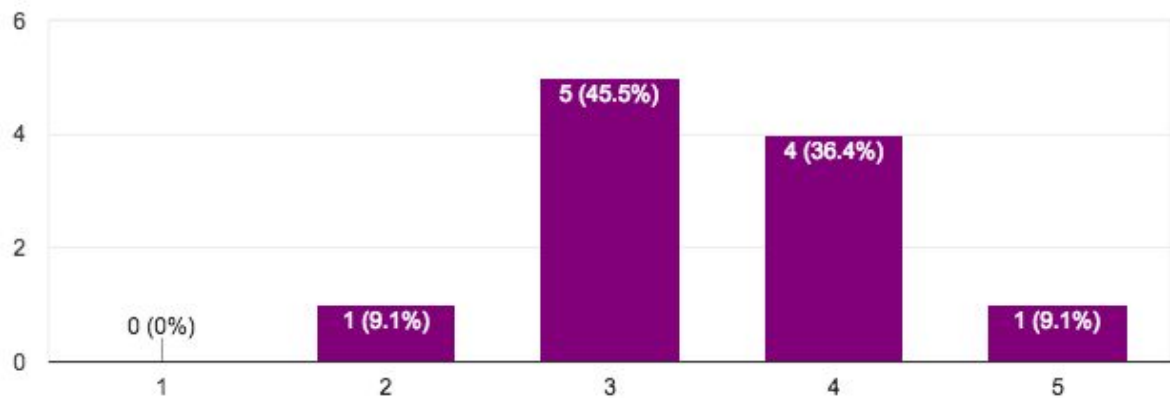
Had a positive relationship with the student leaders on campus

11 responses



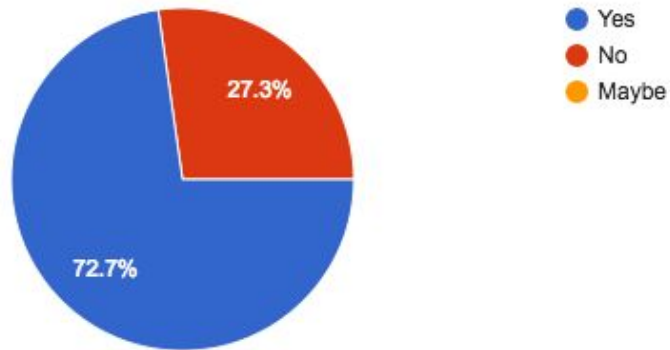
Had a positive relationship with the student leaders in your dorm

11 responses



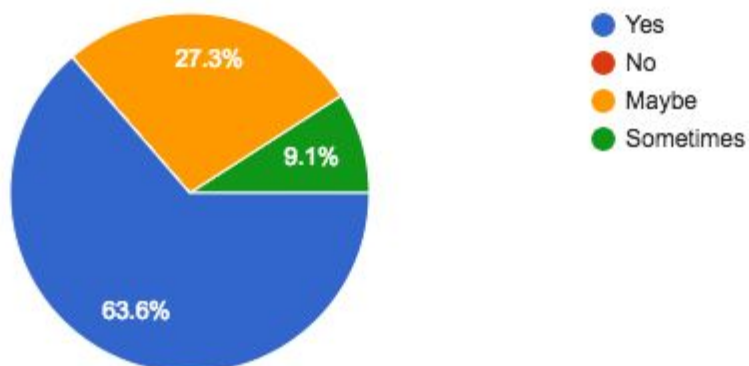
Was a part of the LEAD Scholars program

11 responses



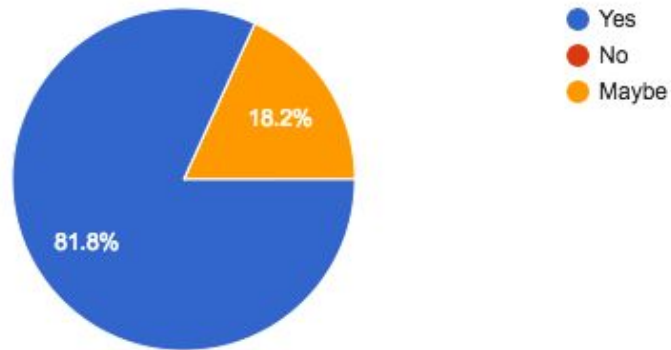
Met with professors outside of class time

11 responses



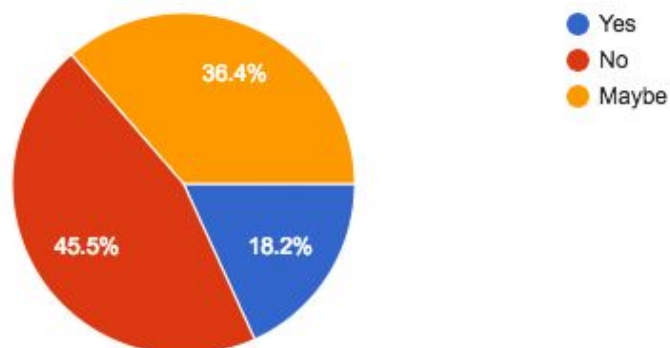
Do you know what the term "retention" means?

11 responses



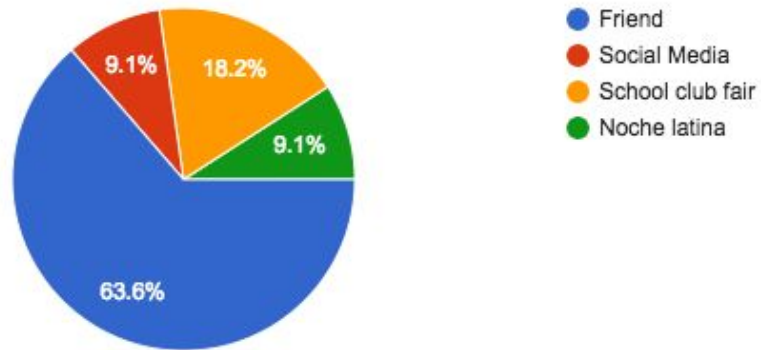
Did you ever feel that the University was doing all that it could to make sure that you felt like staying at the institution for 4 years ?

11 responses



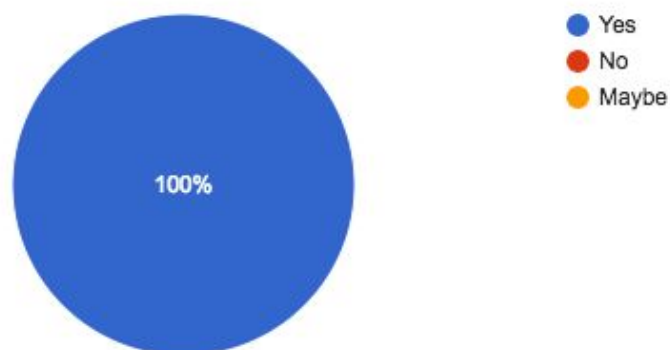
How did you hear about Hermanas Unidas?

11 responses



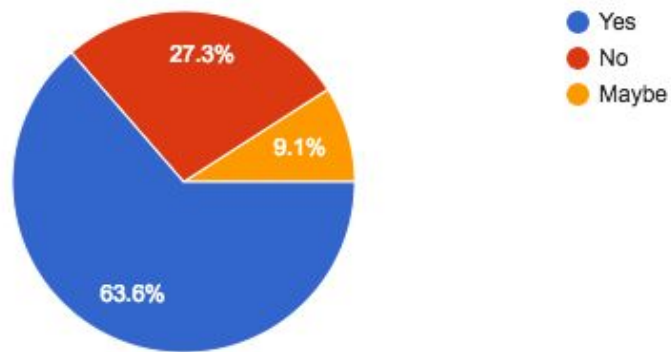
Do you think that the meetings are beneficial to your sense of belonging at your university?

11 responses



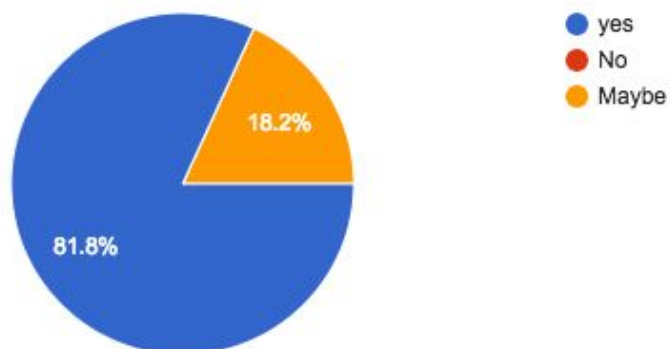
Do you know what the history of Hermanas Unidas at Santa Clara University is?

11 responses



The history of Hermanas Unidas at SCU is: In the Fall of 2007, five Latina women, Evelyn Jacobo-Vega, ...Does the chapter meet the history?

11 responses

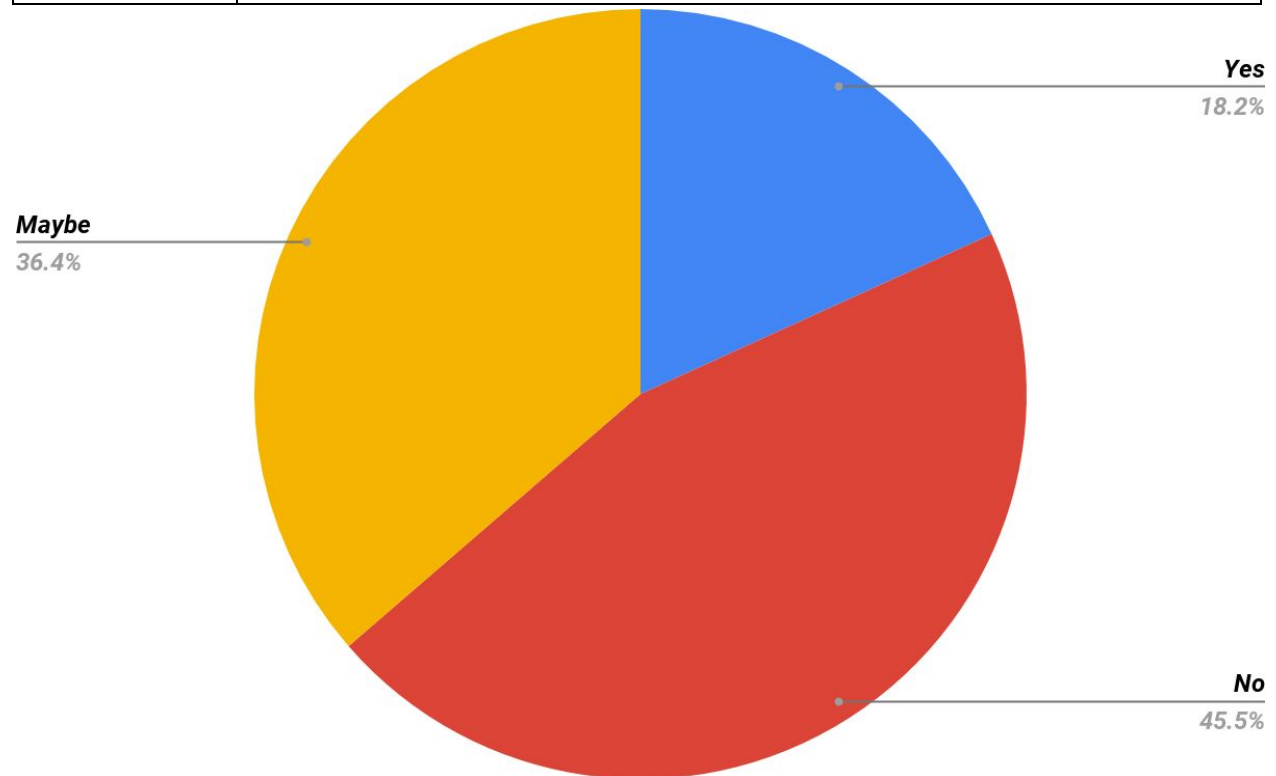


Appendix D:Qualitative Results

a) Describe: Did you ever feel that the University was doing all that it could to make sure that you felt like staying at the institution for 4 years?

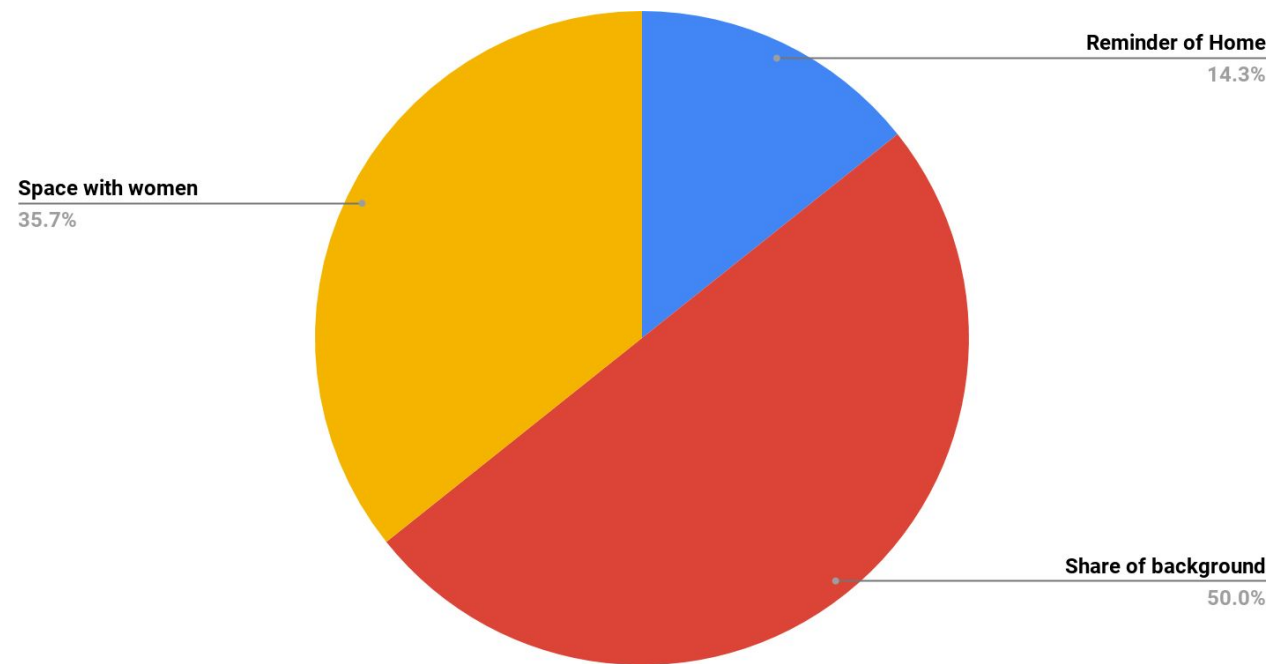
Participant	Response
101	Coming in as a transfer, I knew I wanted to graduate from the SCU business school, also it's close to home.
102	It would be helpful if they provided more resources to Spanish speaking parents
103	It would be helpful if they provided more resources to Spanish speaking parents Certain conversations I've had with members of faculty left me wondering whether dropping out and doing community college might be better for me even though I know it's not
104	I just have one specific event in mind. My first year was marked by the 2016 presidential election in which Donald Trump was elected. I felt that the university's response (ie. a silent solidarity march) was a way to suppress our opinions/voice.
105	The education system as a whole is set up for one type of people to succeed and that refers to the majority. Especially at this school because it is primarily white, this fact is more apparent in and out of the classroom.
106	I was motivated to stay by my support systems here at school; but administration didn't do much to try to retain students (except for Lorenzo, he was always supportive)
107	The university itself does not care about POC or those who are low income. If it wasn't for LEAD and other programs I probably wouldn't have stayed
108	They encouraged me to take up other majors and minors just to stay for all 4 years and was told many times over and over that I couldn't graduate early, even though I knew I had the needed amount of credits and met all requirements
109	I feel like this university focuses their energy on keeping donors rather than addressing issues that could affect the retention of their students
110	I felt like the school has tried to make me want to stay for 4 years, but they could do better.

111	<p>I felt like the school has tried to make me want to stay for 4 years, but they could do better.</p> <p>The university didn't realize that by accepting a student from a low socioeconomic background that it was making a promise to cover for these expenses through all 4 years. After my first year I had to pay out of pocket, without my parents' help, and it was so difficult to not only worry about school but money as well. Also, administration doesn't do the best job at ensuring that the students of color on campus feel safe and secure.</p>
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b) How does Hermanas foster a sense of belonging for you? Explain

Participant	Response
101	Reminds me of home and is familiar to be surrounded by Mexican woman:)
102	I share a similar background with the girls in hermanas.
103	It is nice to be in a room where the majority of people are of the same ethnic group as me because that environment is really hard to find on this campus.
104	Hermanas is a space where I met and have become friends with many successful, hard working, and overall amazing Latina women who I can relate to. It's nice to be able to speak about my struggles and have people understand where I'm coming from. I don't feel alone
105	It allows me to have a space where I can be with women like me and also feel at home.
106	Hermanas gave a sense of belonging. It's easy to feel comfortable in a group of girls who are sharing a similar experience to you
107	It gives me a space to come together with Latina women and speak my mind and feelings without feeling ostracized or oppressed
108	It is a community of girls who all are my same race and ethnicity and is comforting
109	Hermanas provided me with a group I could go to and lean on during my time here at SCU
110	It fosters a space where women of color can speak their minds and share their experiences.
111	I have been on steering for three years now and I love being able to say that. Being part of HaU has formed some of my closest friendships and has helped me gain a sense of pride in my intersectional identities. Being able to share that with other Latina women around me makes me feel like I am not alone and like there will always be people who share your experiences in some way or another



c) The mission of Hermanas Unidas is: Provide resources and leadership opportunities for predominantly women, college students and alumni by participating in and organizing community service events, social activities and academic/professional/self identity workshops. Does the chapter at Santa Clara full fill these aspects? Explain

Participant	Response
101	Yes. That people don't take advantage of these opportunities is another thing
102	Yes, we do community service and social events within the club
103	Yes we have done events such as Christmas in the park and movie nights (social), academic workshops involving study tips and study abroad, community service in San Jose, and and identity workshops involving women's health and our role as Latinas
104	I feel that the chapter could organize more community service events.
105	I think we try to. I think we can work harder on planning events that are focused on the academic well being of our members.
106	Yes; there's a lot of events we can participate in
107	I think we need to do more professional workshops
108	Yes for the most part, but maybe have like resume workshops and share job opportunities and stories of how Hermanas have acquired internships
109	Mostly. I feel like we don't do as much community service as we would like to.
110	Yes, the club tries very hard to set up community service events and set time for members to study and be involved in school activities
111	Yes. I feel like as steering we try our best to stay true to our mission and always host events that encompass our three pillars - keeping in mind that that's why our members joined.